

Josephus Daniels observed that “the cause of Wilmington became the cause of all.”¹⁹

Men Who Could Write

One of the most visible components of the 1898 Democratic campaign was the use of newspapers. Simmons enlisted the help of Josephus Daniels as editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer* to be the “militant voice of White Supremacy.”²⁰ Daniels, a long-time Democrat, was well connected to others in the state’s ruling elite and, in 1894, collaborated with Julian Carr to purchase the *News and Observer* as a tool for the Democratic Party in its fight against Fusion. Using the *News and Observer* first as a barometer of public opinion and then as a weapon, Daniels and Simmons worked together to develop a strong argument against Fusion and in favor of white supremacy in order to win the 1898 election. The paper slowly introduced the white supremacy issue to its readers, fed stories to other papers, and worked the reading public into a frightened and tense frenzy. Especially powerful were the *News and Observer’s* editorial cartoons. Daniels had hired Norman Jennett to draw occasional political cartoons for the paper during the 1896 election season, and, by the 1898 season, Jennett’s cartoons were ever present—both Daniels and Simmons considered the cartoons to be “one of the greatest factors in winning victories.”²¹

¹⁹ A large rally was held in Goldsboro in October with prominent speakers including Aycock and Waddell. Waddell’s speech outlined numerous examples of “negro domination” in Wilmington and what he considered examples of bad Fusion government in the city to rally support for the campaign. Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 301; Hayden, *WLL*, 68; *Wilmington Messenger*, October 28-29, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), October 28, 1898.

²⁰ Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 295.

²¹ Just as Carr had assisted in the start-up of the *News and Observer*, he assisted Jennett’s efforts as well. Jennett attended art school in New York with funding

Daniels asserted that he used “every act and argument that we thought would serve to influence the white people” and credited his paper with headlines that “sealed the doom of Fusion.” Later in life Daniels admitted that the paper was occasionally excessive in its bias toward Democrats and that stories were not fully researched before publication and probably could not be “sustained in a court of justice.” He bragged that, because of the print campaign, “people on every side were at such a key of fighting and hate that the Democrats would believe almost any piece of rascality and the Fusionists got into the habit of denying everything.” By the end of the campaign, the *News and Observer* was a powerful force in campaign rhetoric and portions of its articles were published nationwide.²²

Other editors held up the white supremacy banner and did all within their

provided by Carr, and, by the time of the 1898 campaign, his newfound skills were highly prized by his North Carolina backers. Daniels called Jennett’s cartoons “hard-hitting” and claimed it was the first example of “cartooning in a North Carolina paper.” After the election, Jennett returned to New York to work for the *New York Herald*. Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 147 – 150. The North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has digitized Jennett’s cartoons and a sample of his work will be seen on subsequent pages. Access to the digitized cartoons is part of a larger website that explains the 1898 election:

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/1898.html>

²² Historian Helen Edmonds claimed that the paper “led in a campaign of prejudice, bitterness, vilification, misrepresentation, and exaggeration to influence the emotions of the whites against the Negro.” She further explained that the “cartoons were no less exciting and calculated to strike terror to unsuspecting whites.” Daniels’ impact on the 1898 campaign was so over arching that one writer claims Daniels was the “precipitator of the riot.” Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 141; Alexander Weld Hodges, “Josephus Daniels, Precipitator of the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898” (honors essay, Department of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1990); Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 284-5, 295-6.